

Wrong party

Bush did the job, but now he must go

By Charles Bartlett

WASHINGTON — The happy fact, as George Bush prepares to leave the CIA, is that the intelligence agency has come a long way back from the mauled and tattered state to which it was reduced by an overdose of muck-raking.

Bush is leaving to insure the CIA will continue to have what he has been able to give it — access to the President.

The 11 months of Bush's tenure have produced a number of occasions on which access to the President served the agency well. It was important in balancing the zeal of Justice Department lawyers who tried to lift the veil in areas where disclosure would be damaging.

It was useful in modifying the impact of Pentagon leaks to discredit CIA assessments of the Backfire bomber. Most important, access has assisted Bush to assert his authority over 100,000 members of the intelligence community.

The prospect of installing a new CIA Director at the outset of Jimmy Carter's term, along with the heads of the political departments, will upset some who complained last winter that Bush's appointment was too political.

Some suggested that the DCI should be an intelligence professional who possessed the political detachment of a Supreme Court Justice. The Church Committee was even proposing a nine-year term for the director. In this spirit, Congress voted a ten-year term for FBI Director

in October and Clarence Kelley is described as inclined to serve it out.

Kelley's obduracy will pose a dilemma for Carter, who said many unkind things about him in the campaign. It will certainly not produce a close working relationship, the collaborative spirit which serves to avert the misuse to which the CIA and FBI were subjected by Presidents Johnson and Nixon.

The tenure of the director is a handicap to the agency when it produces a standoff with the White House.

The Rockefeller and Murphy Commissions both urged that the CIA Director be a man of stature and independence, primarily so he can knock on doors. Dealing with an extremely constructive select committee under Sen. Daniel Inouye (D., Hawaii), Bush has built a climate of cordial rapport with Congress.

In a solid new book called "Secrets, Spies, and Scholars," Ray Cline, who served for many years in the top of circles of the intelligent community, writes: "CIA morale has improved; congressional and public confidence has increased. The structure of the U.S. Central Intelligence system as it is now is as sound as it has ever been."

But beneath his professionalism, Bush is a Texas Republican whose calls for his job would be sorely tested by a necessity to deal with a distant and wary President. It will be better for all parties, most importantly for the CIA, for Carter to name his own man.